

The meeting was called to order by Ms. Wedge at 6:12 PM. The following members were present:

Ms. Sylvia Wedge, Chair	Mrs. Terri Cortvriend, Clerk	Mrs. Marge Levesque
Mr. Richard Carpender, V. Chair	Mr. Jamie Heaney	Mr. Douglas Wilkey
	Mr. Michael Buddemeyer	

Also Present: Dr. Lusi, Assistant Superintendent Jermain, Christine Tague, Patti Cofield, and Julie MacDougall (Public Session)

A motion was made by Mr. Carpender and seconded by Mrs. Cortvriend to adjourn to Executive Session pursuant to R.I. Law 42-46-5, Exceptions (a)(1) Job Performance/Personnel Matters, (a)(2) Collective Bargaining and/or Litigation; or (a)(8) Student Discipline. So voted 7-0.

Public Session recessed at 6:12 PM and resumed at 7:10 PM.

1. **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT:** Ms. Wedge announced that an Executive Session was held prior to this meeting, and one vote was taken on a grievance issue regarding the extension of the school day. The vote to deny the grievance passed 7-0. She also announced that an Executive Session was held on September 4, 2007, regarding the grievance on the extension of the school day, and the vote to hold the decision in abeyance was approved 6-1. Mr. Buddemeyer was opposed. Ms. Wedge reported that an Executive Session was held on September 11, 2007, regarding a disciplinary issue. The vote to confirm the termination and uphold the grievance was approved 6-0. A motion was made by Mr. Carpender and seconded by Mrs. Cortvriend to seal the minutes of the Executive Sessions. So voted.
2. **SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT:** Dr. Lusi was pleased to announce that Governor Carcieri will be coming to Portsmouth High School tomorrow at 10:00 AM to announce the RI-ITEST (Rhode Island Information Technology Experiences for Students and Teachers) project to enhance the Physics First-Rhode Island (PF-RI) initiative through the use of Science of Atoms and Molecules (SAM) materials and enhance IT education by teaching modeling skills and providing students with career and vocational information on the use of computational models. The purpose of the work is to basically rethink the way we teach science in the schools. The work started through Physics First is now moving forward into the chemistry level. She reported that the School Committee will be voting on participation in the grant. She commended the Mr. Schoonover and the Science Department Staff and Mrs. Jermain, who was very instrumental in getting Portsmouth involved in this project.

Dr. Lusi reminded the School Committee of and invited the public to the Wind Turbine Project Workshop with the Town Council on October 1, 2007, in the Town Council Chambers.

Dr. Lusi read a letter from the Portsmouth Public Education Foundation (PPEF) regarding the Fall Showcase on October 11, 2007, at Green Valley Country Club. She also announced the formation of the Portsmouth United Organization. Mrs. Marianne Raymo and other volunteers have developed an umbrella 501(c)3 for the PTOs, so that they don't have to go through the process individually. Mrs. Raymo will address the School Committee about it in October and ask that a School Committee liaison be part of their organization. Attorney Updegrave recommended that the School Committee liaison not be a voting member of the organization.

Dr. Lusi announced that she will be distributing a newsletter next week targeted at parents and guardians entitled Parents Have Homework, Too. This information helps make parents successful in partnership with the schools. The newsletter will also be sent home in back-packs and sent out on the listservs.

- a) **Teaching and Learning:** Assistant Superintendent Jermain stated it has been a very busy month. She and Dr. Lusi have been attending Open House and Curriculum Nights. She reported that the 5<sup>th</sup> Grade parents will be receiving a letter regarding 5<sup>th</sup> Grade band, and an instrument night will be held the second week of October. She also reported that Gail Darmody and Rose Muller are meeting with community members and their boards to update our present Technology Plan, and Mrs. Muller will present it at the next School Committee meeting. Mrs. Jermain stated that the elementary level computers really need to be upgraded to Pentium 4s. She announced that she will be attending the Healthy Breakfast Coalition meeting at the Crown Plaza in Warwick on October 10<sup>th</sup> to review goals and plans of other communities. She also announced that Professional Development has been very busy, and a new scheduling program has been started. The High School is finishing up their proficiency report. She, Dr. Lusi, and Mr. Littlefield met with Roy Seitsinger, who oversees the initiative at the Department of Education, to discuss how we can make this a process that is meaningful for all of us.
- b) **Finance and Operations:** Ms. Tague reported that the deadline for submitting the In\$ite report was September 14<sup>th</sup>, and this is the first year we submitted it two weeks ahead of time. She reported that she has also been working on Impact Aid. She announced that training on the new financial software package will take place on October 25<sup>th</sup>. The Principals will have online access to their building's financial information, and the building clerks will be able to input their own requisitions, which historically was not possible. Ms. Tague will update the School Committee with a revised budget to review and approve at the next meeting.
- c) **High School Liaison:** Miss Julie MacDougall reported that the Seniors are starting their Senior Projects. Homecoming activities are taking place, and a blood drive is being held on Friday. She stated that Portsmouth High School has been the leading school in Rhode Island for donating blood.

3. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

Mr. Carpender made a motion to approve the minutes of the meetings held August 21, 2007, and September 4, 2007. Seconded by Mrs. Cortvriend. So voted. Mrs. Levesque abstained from voting on the August 21, 2007, minutes due to her absence from that meeting.

4. **CONSENT AGENDA**

- a) **Appt. – Custodian, Category A, PMS.** The Superintendent recommends adoption of the following resolution, "that the School Committee affirms the Superintendent's appointment, Recommendation #1-9/25/07, to the position of Custodian, Category A, at Portsmouth Middle School, effective immediately."
- b) **Appt. – General School Aide, Melville.** The Superintendent recommends adoption of the following resolution, "that the Committee affirms the Superintendent's appointment, Recommendation #2-9/25/07, to the position of General School Aide at Melville School, effective immediately."
- c) **Appt. – PMS Grade 8 House Leader.** The Superintendent recommends adoption of the following resolution, "that the Committee affirms the Superintendent's appointment, Recommendation #3-9/25/07, to the position of Grade 8 House Leader at Portsmouth Middle School, effective immediately."
- d) **Appt. – Part-time Clerk, Hathaway.** The Superintendent recommends adoption of the following resolution, "that the Committee affirms the Superintendent's appointment, Recommendation #4-9/25/07, to the position of Clerk, part-time, at Hathaway School, effective immediately."
- e) **Teacher Resignation.** The Superintendent recommends adoption of the following resolution, "that the School Committee accepts the resignation of Christine Wirth, Part-time Grade 8 Math and Science Teacher at Portsmouth Middle School, effective immediately."
- f) **Approval of Requests for Permission to Home School.** The Superintendent recommends adoption of the following resolution, "that the Committee approves the requests to provide home schooling for the 2007-08 school year for students HS#12 through HS#14-9/07, as listed in the confidential memo dated September 19, 2007, in accordance with the provisions of R.I. Law 16-19-2."

Mr. Carpender made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. Seconded by Mrs. Cortvriend. So voted 7-0. Dr. Lusi announced the following appointments:

- a) Christian Ouelette - Custodian, Category A, PMS.
- b) Zoe Hammond - General School Aide, Elmhurst.
- c) Lisa Freeman - Grade 8 House Leader, PMS.
- d) Judith Krupa - Part-time Clerk, Hathaway.

5. **BUSINESS AGENDA**

- a) **Agenda Item Request – Portsmouth Youth Basketball League.** Requested by Jeff Swider. Mrs. Swider distributed information regarding the basketball league to the Committee. Mr. Swider stated that a youth basketball program is lacking in Portsmouth, and that is why he and a group of parents have formed the Portsmouth Youth Basketball League. The group would like to use the high school and middle school gymnasiums, and they are asking the Committee for a little incentive to get the program off the ground. They didn't realize there were building use fees involved other than paying for the custodian. They realize non-profit groups get a 50 percent discount of building use fees, and they are asking the School Committee for an additional 25 percent discount for this year only to help get their league off the ground. Mr. Carpender stated that he wanted to support the league and thinks it is a great idea, however, he didn't feel he had enough information to make a decision at this time. He would like to see the league's budget before making a decision. He also asked Dr. Lusi to put together some very stringent guidelines for any groups coming forward with similar requests. Mr. Swider will provide the leagues budget information at the next School Committee meeting. He stated that the league is being launched tomorrow regardless of the outcome of their request.
- b) **Request for Approval – National Science Foundation's Curriculum Project.** A motion was made by Mr. Carpender to approve Portsmouth's participation in the National Science Foundation's Curriculum Project. Seconded by Mrs. Cortvriend. Dr. Lusi explained the project. So voted 7-0.
- c) **Defining a Basic Education for Portsmouth, Part 3.** Dr. Lusi completed her Power-Point presentation on Defining a Basic Education for Portsmouth Students (see attached).
- d) **Review/Approval of 2006-07 Year-End Revenue and Expenditures.** A motion was made by Mr. Carpender and seconded by Mrs. Cortvriend to approve the year-end 6/30/07 School Department budget, as presented. Ms. Tague announced that the School Department ended FY 2007 with an operating surplus of \$43,864, when comparing total revenue to expenditures. She stated that this report is unaudited, and the audit is commencing on October 15<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Carpender read the statement he generated about the PCC's contention regarding illegal budget action. It read as follows:

*"On September 7, 2007 Larry Fitzmorris, as the President and on behalf of the PCC, sent a letter to the Town Council claiming that the Town Council and the School Committee had illegally taken action to "exceed the authorized numbers by \$634,749; with excesses of \$348,077 in the municipal departments and \$250,672 in the School Department".*

*While I can not speak to the municipal budget I can speak to the School Department budget. Mr. Fitzmorris in his position as President of the PCC attended almost all local budget meetings and hearings. He attended every Court Session for the Caruolo Filing, the PCC hired an Attorney to represent them in the Court Case, petitioned to be a party in the case and when denied they were*

*allowed to file a Friend of The Court Briefing, and they received a copy of Judge Indeglia's ruling filed on March 16, 2007. However, with all this information ; when putting together the PCC letter and formal spreadsheet submitted to the Town Council as a supporting document in reference to the School Department budget he conveniently forgets major parts of that decision and how the number was reached. I also find it interesting that although the Court Decision was filed in March with the School Department bottom line being approved in April the PCC waits until September to raise any concerns.*

*Judge Indeglia's oral and written decisions were clear:*

- *Page 9 of the decision – in reference to numbers to be used “this court gives greater weight to the testimony and budgetary calculations presented by Mr. Sweeney and Mr. Edge” – and budgetary calculations.*
- *Page 9 of the decision – “B&E recommended ... that the School Committee budget as appropriated at the tent meeting fell \$787,051 short of the amount necessary to run the Portsmouth School System... Based on testimony and this Court's review ... this Court finds that the amount appropriated to the School Committee from the Tent meeting is \$544,051 less than needed. This whole section speaks to the amount appropriated through taxes but makes no mention of revenue.*
- *Page 10 of the decision – Starts to make recommendations as to budget cuts and the use of additional revenues. “This Court feels that adjustments can be made to the original figure of \$787,051 submitted by B&E”; showing acceptance of B&E figures... “specifically, this Court has identified 1 potential source of revenue and 4 areas where expenses can be decreased. The following are intended as mere suggestions and in no way limit the School Committee or Town Council in how best to address the shortfall”. In B&E's calculations accepted by Judge Ideglia B&E had already included some additional revenue sources in Medicaid and Cash Balances that were available.*
- *Page 10 and 11 of the decision – includes suggestions in revenue and deductions – suggestions. These include using the rest of the Medicaid reimbursement funds, eliminating the financial audit, reducing the Special education pipeline, not hiring a Finance Director, and using Warrant Money.*
- *Page 19 of Oral Decision – “And as I've indicated certainly the School Committee can use any areas they want to make those adjustments”*
- *Page 19 of Oral Decision – With regard to the Town of Portsmouth, it is now necessary for that entity to raise that \$544,051.”*

*Clearly Judge Indeglia in his decision agreed with the additional \$787,051 over additional revenue already identified by B&E but felt that that amount was excessive to the taxpayers of Portsmouth as an appropriation. However, in his decision he also mentioned potential suggestions on both the revenue and expense side of the budget to get to the number he thought was acceptable as an additional appropriation.*

*As Judge Indeglia stated in his oral decision he accepted B&E's base figure, and said again in his written decision that B&E's figures were the most accurate. B&E's figure of \$787,051*

*coming from the Town, was based on the finding that the School Department needed an additional \$937,723 in funding, but that \$19,237 of that amount could come from additional revenues, and \$131,435 from cash balances. This meant that only the remaining \$787,051 needed to come from additional Town appropriations. Indeglia then adjusted the amount of money the Town had to appropriate by identifying other revenue sources, i.e., additional Medicaid funds, and by reducing expenditures by, for example, eliminating the performance audit leaving the Medicaid and additional revenue in place.*

*The end result is that while the Town only had to appropriate an additional \$569,051, the Council had to increase the School Department's bottom line by \$819,723 so that the School Department could expend the \$250,672; \$100,000 Medicaid, \$131,435 Cash Balance, and \$19,237 of additional revenues authorized in the decision. All perfectly within the Court's decision. However, the PCC would like to have the Town pay additional money to audit the final bottom line of the budget instead of coming to the School Committee or School Department with their concerns first for discussion.*

*I need to be clear about another matter. While, I support the concept of a watchdog group for the taxpayers; I believe that the PCC has gone beyond that and has become a special interest group and should be identified as such. Although the PCC generally identifies themselves as a Taxpayer Group membership is not open to all taxpayers, and, as I understand it, meetings are closed. They endorse specific candidates which in and of itself I don't have a problem with. However, when they work to get those candidates elected with in-kind contributions and are unwilling to talk money because they "don't have to" I have a problem. They put out misleading information in their Newsletter that is read by more than just their membership. The latest case in point was the last Newsletter when they gave one of their endorsed candidates credit for brokering a deal to keep the Prudence Island School open and have the School Committee pay for Warrants next year. The reality was that I made a presentation on behalf of the School Committee to the Town Council before anyone on the Council thought of it and it was rejected. Although the Council member approached me about keeping the school open we were unwilling to reopen the school until we had an unexpected windfall in our medical premiums. At that time we said we would keep it open one more year.*

*Inaccurate and misleading – the PCC in their letter to the Council accuses the Council, The Town Administrator, or Finance Director of providing inaccurate or misleading data to the Office of Municipal Affairs and The Auditor General in regard to authorized spending levels. As I say to individuals when they make unsubstantiated statements – show me the proof; don't just throw things against the wall to see what sticks. If you have no proof then you are guilty of disseminating inaccurate and misleading data and an apology is due.*

*I believe it is time for The PCC to stop claiming to represent the taxpayers of Portsmouth when in reality they represent their own membership and not all the taxpayers.*

Mr. Fitzmorris responded to Mr. Carpender's points. He stated that the PCC is not requesting the Council to adjust the budget. They are asking them to answer why the Town budget totals established by the tent meeting and adjusted by Indeglia were higher

than they should be. The motion to approve the year-end 6/30/07 School Department budget as presented passed 7-0.

- e) **Report on Text and Library Book Purchases.** Asst. Supt. Jermain reported that the PHS librarian has completed a collection analysis and determined the areas most in need of updating and improvement. It is reported that our collection stands at just under 12,000 volumes. In an effort to cultivate lifelong learners with a love of reading, there is renewed focus on print materials. The new fiction, such as historic novels, supplements the curriculum by offering applied learning experiences. It also provides recreational reading materials. New non-fiction materials will support the curriculum, Senior Project and recreational reading. The 2006 NEASC Commission Report states “[I]t is clear that the print collection does not fully support current curriculum and instructional practices.” “Teaching and learning are negatively impacted by the age and small size of the print collection.” The analysis, done by Librarian Sarah Hunicke, shows that the average age of their collection is 27 years. The goal is to establish and maintain an ideal print collection over a 10-year period in which 70% of the books have a publication date of ten years old or less. Newer books must be added to the collection and old, irrelevant, and incorrect materials must continue to be weeded. Current library print material expenditures are: 18 Magazine Subscriptions to support lower level readers, curriculum, and independent reading; Newspaper Subscriptions; Fiction order to support summer reading, curriculum, and independent projects; Non-fiction order to support curriculum, senior project, and independent reading; Reference book order to support English curriculum; Additional reference materials and non-fiction materials to support Social Studies and English. Studies have shown that the quality of a library media center directly impacts the academic achievement of the students. The Library Media Center is the academic heart of Portsmouth High School. It affects every student and teacher. The Elementary and PMS libraries are undergoing the same analysis and should be completed by the end of October.

## 6. SUBCOMMITTEE AGENDA

- a) **Finance:** No report.
- b) **Policy:** Mrs. Levesque inquired about the technology policies. Asst. Supt. Jermain stated that they would be ready in October. Mrs. Levesque would like to schedule a meeting to discuss building use fees next month.
- c) **Gymnasium Construction Oversight Committee (GCOC):** Mrs. Cortvriend stated that the 1-year walkthrough was held today with Mr. Davidson and Mr. Edwards.
- d) **Fundraising:** Ms. Wedge stated that the bricks will be ready next month.
- e) **Prudence Island School Working Committee:** Mr. Carpender reported that he is trying to schedule a meeting for this Saturday.

Mr. Carpender made a motion to adjourn. Seconded by Mrs. Cortvriend. So voted 7-0. The meeting adjourned at 9:41 PM.

Respectfully submitted:

Patti Cofield  
Recording Secretary for

Terri Cortvriend, Clerk